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AN EXAMPLE OF PSYCHIC ATAVISM.

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AMONG the examples of psychic atavism, the most notable one is that which makes itself evident in the relation that exists between religious emotion and sexual desire. Religious emotion and sexual desire are so clearly allied, that the cultivated ethical emotion—religion, frequently takes the place of the natural desire—*libido*, with perfect success. *Per contra* excessive religious zeal quite frequently becomes changed in character, loses its ethical purity and becomes sexual desire. It cannot be denied that man becomes religiously enthused most frequently, either early in life, when *vita sexualis* is about to be established, or, late in life, when *libido* has become extinct. We know how impressionable young boys and girls are at puberty, and how easily they become religious enthusiasts. A census of all the religious converts of the year 1894, would show nine-tenths of the whole number to be made up of young unmarried people and those who have passed the meridian of life.' In this age of civilization, youth, hedged about,

"Men and women seldom or never enter into the kingdom of God after they have arrived at maturity. Out of a thousand converts, seven hundred are converted before they are twenty years old." B. Fay Mills in a "Sermon to Young Men and Young Women," at Owensboro, Ky., May 20, 1894.

as it is, by certain moral restrictions; ignorant of the differences in the sexes and filled with indefinite longings and desires, eagerly seizes upon religion to satisfy its yearnings. It may seem strange, yet it is nevertheless true, that this substitution of a cultivated ethical emotion for a natural desire, is, in the vast majority of instances, entirely successful. Civilization without religion is impossible. The very foundations of society are based on elements springing from religious belief. The rise and subsequent downfall of ancient civilization prove the truthfulness of this assertion. Notwithstanding the fact that Aphrodite was worshipped in ancient Greece, and Holy Knût ranked very high in the theogony of ancient Egypt, virtue was considered a *sine qua non*, and the curses of the gods to be the portion of the licentious and the libidinous. As soon as the people became irreligious, consequently immoral, civilization vanished and savagery reasserted itself.

Civilized man no longer defends his womankind with the natural weapons of his pithecoïd ancestor. In the process of civilization he has learned to build around woman an invisible but insurmountable barrier, made up of certain well established psychical elements called morals. Woman herself has acquired auto-defensive weapons—modesty, virtue, chastity. Innate animal passion is by no means extinct in men and women; it is simply, for the good of society, directed and held in check by a cultivated function—morals.

Men, owing to their environments and their opportunities, learn early in life the difference of the sexes. Woman, hedged in by conventionalities and deterred by her modesty, remains in ignorance of sexual knowledge until her marriage. For this reason it happens that very many more women than men experience religious emotion. Young married men and women, who are in perfect sexual health, and who have not experienced religion before marriage, seldom give this emotion a single thought until late in life when *libido* and *vita sexualis* are on the wane. Married life obtunds religious fervor.

Religion has a rival in the husband or wife, in the father or mother, or in the child. So true is this in the case of the woman that I venture to assert that seven out of ten women, if such a test could be instituted, would willingly prefer to give up religion rather than their husbands or their children. Voltaire was a cynic and an infidel, yet he was, withal, an accurate observer. He says of woman that when she no longer is capable of pleasing man, she then turns to God. The spinster who is unsuccessful in the pursuit of a husband turns to God and religion with impassioned zeal and energy. Unsatisfied sensuality frequently finds its equivalent in religious enthusiasm. The nun Blanekin was continually worried about the circumcised foreskin of Christ; where it was, and what had become of it. St. Catherine of Genoa, in an ecstasy of *libido*, would frequently cast herself on the ground, crying: "Love, love, I can endure it no longer!" St. Armelle and St. Elizabeth were troubled with *libido* for the child Jesus. A recent historian tells us that the nuns sent over to America in the early days of colonization to convert the Indians, were frequently seized with frenzy, and showed by their words and actions that sexual desire was the incentive of their intense religious emotion. Says he, when speaking of Marie de l'Incarnation: "She heard, in a trance, a miraculous voice. It was that of Christ, promising to become her spouse. Months and years passed, full of troubled hopes and fears, when again the voice sounded in her ear, with assurance that the promise was fulfilled, and that she was, indeed, His bride. Now, ensued phenomena which are not infrequent among Roman Catholic female devotees, when unmarried, or married unhappily, and which have their source in the necessities of a woman's nature. To her excited thought, her Divine spouse became a living presence; and her language to Him, as recorded by herself, is of intense passion. She went to prayer, agitated and tremulous, as if to a meeting with an earthly lover. 'Oh, my Love!' she exclaimed, 'when shall I embrace you? Have you no pity on the

torments that I suffer? Alas! alas! my Love, my Beauty, my Life! instead of healing my pain, You take pleasure in it. Come, let me embrace You, and die in Your sacred arms!"² Clearly here is a case for the physiologist as well as the theologian; and the "holy widow," as her biographers call her, becomes an example and a lamentable one of the tendency of the erotic principle to ally itself with high religious excitement.³ Again, he says: "Some of the pupils of Marie de l'Incarnation also had mystical marriages with Christ; and the impassioned rhapsodies of one of them being overheard she nearly lost her character, as it was thought that she was apostrophizing an earthly lover."⁴ St. Veronica was so much in love with the Divine lion, that she took a lion to bed with her, kissed it and caressed it and allowed it to suck her breasts. A German devotee, St. Gertrude, once made a speech that has since become a proverb:⁵ "Sobald das Verlange nach geschlechtlichem Umgange aufhört, dann steigt die seele hoher." The relation between religious and sexual feeling is also shown on the basis of unequivocal psycho-pathological states.⁶ "It suffices to recall how intense sensuality makes itself manifest in the clinical histories of many religious

² "O, amour! quand vous embrasserez je? N'avez vous point pitié de moi dans le tourment que je souffre? hélas! hélas! mon amour ma beauté, ma vie! au lieu de me guerir, vous vous plaisez á mes maux. Venez donc que je vous embrasse et je meure entre vos bras sacréz!", *Journal de Marie de l'Incarnation*.

³ Francis Parkman: *The Jesuits in North America*, p. 175. *et seq.*

⁴ Francis Parkman: *The Jesuits in North America*, p. 177.

⁵ August Holzknecht.

⁶ "All through the history of insanity the student has occasion to observe this close alliance of sexual and religious ideas; an alliance which may be partly accounted for because of the prominence which sexual themes have in most creeds, as illustrated in ancient times by the Phallus worship of the Egyptians, the ceremonies of the Friga cultus of the Saxons, the frequent and detailed reference to sexual topics in the Koran and several other books of the kind; and which is further illustrated in the performances which, to come down to a modern period, characterize the religious revival and 'camp-meeting' as they tinged their mediæval model, the Münster and Baptist movement." Spitzka, *Insanity*, p. 39.

maniacs; the motley mixture of religious and sexual delusions that is so frequently observed in psychoses (*e. g.*, in maniacal women who think they are or will be the mother of God), but particularly in masturbatic insanity; and finally, the sexual, cruel self-punishments, injuries, self castrations, and even self-crucifixions resulting from abnormal religio-sexual feeling."¹ Berghierri gives a remarkable instance of religio-sexual feeling. The man in question had been intensely sensual. He manufactured a cross, nailed himself to it, and ingeniously managed to suspend himself and cross from the window of his sleeping apartment. We see, frequently, instances of religio-sexual feeling recorded in the Bible. Hosea married a prostitute because—so he declared—God commanded him so to do. Solomon's beautiful song (if it is typical of the church) shows that he was thoroughly imbued with religio-sexual feeling; religious emotion and sexual desire walk hand in hand through the measures of his impassioned verses. Circumcision, eminently a religious ceremony is, unquestionably, a sexual fetich. It is not necessary to enumerate further instances of religio-sexual feeling, though the Bible fairly teems with them. Many attempts have been made to explain the relation that exists between religious emotion and sexual desire. Kraft-Ebing, Schliemacher, Friedreich, Neuman and numerous other physiologists and psychologists have advanced theories, none of which, in my opinion, are at all tenable. I believe that the relation between religious emotion and sexual desire, as we now find it, is a natural one and that it is the result of psychical atavism. In order to prove this it will be necessary to explain the origin of religious feeling. I will preface that which follows with the statement that I do not reject the theory of animism. As far as it pertains to the origin of the belief in the existence of a soul, I think that it is correct. I do not believe, however, that ancestral worship was the first religion. Solar worship undoubtedly preceded it.

The gods and goddesses of primitive man, wherever

¹ Kraft Ebing: *Psychopathia Sexualis*, p. 8

found, were elaborated from, and had their origin in, various natural phenomena. It is not at all probable that man, in his extreme infancy, just after his evolution from his ape-like ancestor, had, at first, any belief whatever in supernatural agencies. In his struggle for existence all of his powers were directed toward the procurement of food and the preservation of his life. The pithecoïd man was only a degree higher than the beasts in the scale of animal life. His psychic being as yet remained, as it were, *in ovo*, and a long period of time must have elapsed before he began to recognize and to formulate a system of theogony. After years of experience, during which the laws of heredity and progressive evolution played prominent parts, he took precedence over other animals, and his struggle for existence became easier. He then had time and opportunity to observe and study the wonderful and, to him, mysterious phenomena of nature. His psychic being sprang into existence, to satisfy which he created a god or, rather a system of gods. His limited knowledge could not explain the phenomena of nature, therefore, he looked upon them as being mysterious and supernatural. It is proper, therefore, to acknowledge that, in the beginning, the theogony of primitive man was founded on nature alone. The idea of religion, in the Terra del Fuegian and Patagonian, had not yet been evolved when they were first discovered. They had no god, and had not even elaborated any idea of the supernatural. Their struggle for existence in their sterile and inhospitable land was so severe that all their energies were expended in it. The autochthon of India, when first discovered, was, in religious beliefs, equally immature. He had no god. Even the good and evil principles were as yet unrecognized. He wandered through the woods subsisting on berries and fruits and such small animals as his undeveloped and feeble sagacity allowed him to capture and slay. He did not even provide himself a shelter, but, in pristine nakedness, roamed the forests of the Ghauts, an animal but slightly above the anthropoid

apes in point of intelligence. The gods of primitive man were few in number. The chief god of all was the sun. Man early recognized the sun's importance in the economy of nature. This beautiful star, rising in the east in the morning, marching through the heavens during the day, and sinking behind the western horizon in the evening, must have been, to the awakening souls of men, a source of endless conjecture and debate. What was more natural than their making him the greatest god in their system of theogony! They recognized in him the source of all life, and when he appeared above the eastern horizon, they turned their faces toward him and bowed in adoration. Even to this day, relics and reminders of the solar worship of our ancestors exist in us. Our ancestors, unable to look upon the bright sun, closed their eyes. Just so we, following a perfectly natural law, close our eyes when addressing God. The worship of the sun was universal. The generally conceived idea of the sun held by primitive man, was, that he was a god who came up out of the east (the sea where known), who marched through the heavens during the day, and who was swallowed up by a great and powerful beast in the west at nightfall. This great beast moved under the earth during the night, occasionally striking it with his back (earthquakes), and regurgitated the sun in the east in the morning. This belief can be found, in some form or other, in the myths and folklore of every nation in the world. We have it in the tale of "Little Red Ridinghood," the German *Rothkäppchen*. The red hood is the red clouds of dawn; the journey through the wood is the sun's journey through the heavens; the swallowing by the wolf is the swallowing by the fabled beast, and, in the German version, the ripping up of the wolf by the huntsmen, and the reappearance of "Little Red Cap" unharmed, the reappearance of the sun in the east in the morning. Again, it is found in the myths of Jonah and the whale, and Hercules and the rescued cattle. In the hymns of the Rig-Veda, and in the folklore stories of the Hindu, it appears time and

again. I have heard it, in some form or other, from the lips of Cherokees, Chihuahuas, Choctaws and Creeks. Assineboines, Mandaus, Gros-Ventres and Sioux have the same tale. Travellers inform us that they have heard it in the wilds of equatorial Africa. Several years ago it was told me by an Ishogo negro, who could scarcely make himself understood, his knowledge of English was so imperfect. The Ainu of Japan is still, to a certain extent, a worshipper of the sun. Batchelor tells us of the sacred east window, which every hut possesses, and around which are grouped their willow *inao*, or prayer sticks.

The Pueblos, Chihuahua, and numerous other Indians in southwest North America, are sun worshippers, although their religion has taken a step upwards and has become ethical (concrete) in character, for they are Phallic worshippers also. The theogony of sun worshippers has undergone certain changes in the process of evolution. As the mind of man developed, he began to go outside the phenomena of nature in the upbuilding of his system of theogony. His religion acquired a certain æstheticism, and he began to deify his emotions and physical attributes. The desire of continuing and preserving race and species is present in all animals. It is their chief end. Primitive man considered the sun to be the author of all life, therefore he made a god of him. He was to be asked daily to continue his beneficent course and thus assure to his worshippers health and life. The sun—day—was life, *per contra*, the fabled beast—night—was death. The beast was also to be propitiated. He was asked to give back the sun in the morning and not to bring misery and death into the world. The autocthon considered the fabled beast to be the author of disease and death. They considered every involuntary spasm of the muscles a visible evidence of the presence of the beast himself. This idea, unconsciously to man, continues to this day. If the baby sneezes the English mother piously ejaculates, "God bless you," the German mother murmurs, "*Gesundheit*."

We read frequently in the Bible of men who were "possessed of devils" (epilepsy), and, in Barbadoes, the negroes thrash the unfortunate epileptic "to run the devil out."

In the beginning, the sun was the good principle, the beast was the evil principle. The words, good and evil, were not used by primitive man in a moral sense. He used them in their literal sense as pertaining solely to his personal welfare. Morals are the result of evolution, primitive man knew them not. Closely allied to solar worship, and elaborated directly from it, was Phallic worship. The snake, one of the symbols of phallic worship, was regarded with awe throughout the whole world. It plays a prominent role in the narrative of the genesis of the human race as related in the Bible. The snake's significance in this narrative is perfectly apparent when we read that Adam and Eve "knew their nakedness" after their temptation and fall.

Primitive man regarded the sun as being the source of life. Allowing concrete ethics to come into his religion for the first time, he deified the life-producing principle as found in himself and transmitted to his offspring. Priapus (Lat.), therefore, was the first of the long list of ethical gods afterwards evolved. Phallic worship, or the worship of the generative principle, was the first ethical religion.

Vestiges of phallic religion yet linger in the most civilized nations. The be-ribboned May-pole is but the flower-decked Phallus of the Roman matrons.

The feasts of the Liberalia and Saturnalia still exist, although they have lost their significance and are hidden beneath their Christian nomenclature.

Charms against *Jettatura*, "the evil eye," can still be bought on the streets of Rome. This charm is a little coral hand, with the middle finger extended, the other fingers being closed on the palms. This was one of the most common symbols of Priapus in the ancient days when he was the most honored of all the gods. *Judy na Grig*, "Judy the giddy," still perches above the doors of

some of the most ancient Irish churches, and as late as the latter part of the eighteenth century, votive offerings of the phallus, made of wax, were laid upon the altar of a church not thirty miles from Genoa. *

We have thus traced religion to its source and find that, in its inception, it had its origin in sexual desire. Centuries and centuries of years have elapsed since that time, and religion has acquired an abstract ethical element—the love of God—yet blended with it, tho' in a measure not to be appreciated, is that ancient concrete ethical element which, in the beginning, had its origin in the worship of the generative principle.

Therapeutics of Trional.—This hypnotic (one of the sulfone series) has lately been the subject of renewed interest on account of its special value in certain cases in which hypnosis or sedation has not been so well produced by some of the other drugs employed in insomnia and the neuroses. The reports speak favorably of it as having a prompt and reliable action; for instance, in the forms of insomnia determined by neurasthenia, functional psychosis and organic brain lesions. The usual dose is 15 to 50 grains, although single doses of 45 to 60 grains, and daily quantities of 90 to 120 grains, may be given with impunity. The effect of Trional is said (*Deut. Med. Woch.*, No. 52) to be increased by giving it on alternate days with sulfonel. Boettinger (*Berl. Klin. Woch.*) states that Trional is especially useful in the insomnia observed in cases of slight psychical excitement and mental disturbances of a primary or secondary character. He gave 15 to 50 grains at bed-time. In conditions of marked excitement he often gave it in 15 grain doses several times during the day.

* Vid. Worship of Priapus.